



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

ADVISORY

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Office of Inspector General Principles and Standards

In recent months, it has become increasingly clear that a stronger dialogue is needed between County leaders and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to ensure the OIG's independence and promote accountability and integrity in County government. Notwithstanding achievements made by the County Council in late 2009 and earlier this year to authorize the inspector general to hire independent legal counsel and strengthen whistleblower protection, efforts between the OIG and the Chief Administrative Officer's designated representatives to apply OIG principles and standards need to be significantly improved. Additional work is needed to improve communications between the OIG, CAO, Council Audit Committee and County Attorney to: understand and clarify the inspector general's mandate, authority, and powers; provide for the confidentiality of records and protection of employees or contractors who choose to report confidential information to the OIG; and exchange mutual professionalism and respect.

The OIG welcomed the memorandum sent on May 19, 2010 by Chief Administrative Officer Timothy L. Firestine. However, although the OIG appreciates the time and effort put forth in the preparation of this memorandum, the OIG does not necessarily agree with the content of the document. As an example of my disagreement, on page 14, the memorandum states, "In addition, OCA (Office of County Attorney) noted that your request (OIG) included names of individuals of interest that had not come to OCA's attention at this stage of the investigation, and OCA accordingly broadened its previous request for emails to include these additional individuals." There was no information exchanged between the OIG and OCA regarding the names of the employees included in the OIG's confidential request for information to the County's Chief Information Officer (CIO), Department of Technology Services. In addition, the OCA never communicated to the OIG that it was going to include all names from the OIG's request in the OCA's investigation, or that the OCA shared the names with representatives of the Department of Police.

It was inappropriate and inaccurate for the OCA to assume that the names confidentially reported by the OIG to the CIO were “individuals of interest” for an OCA investigation. Further, the decision by the OCA to include the names of employees reported to the CIO without first discussing it with the OIG is contrary to the basic principles and standards needed to ensure the independence of OIG work, protect confidential information, and safeguard the identity of confidential sources.

The OIG recognizes the important role of the Council’s Audit Committee, which the OIG helped establish in 2008. I believe the Audit Committee will be needed to increase County leadership’s understanding of the inspector general concept and the OIG’s important role in the County’s governance system.

I remain committed to ensuring the OIG’s use of the generally accepted principles and standards published by the Association of Inspectors General to carry out its mission. I am equally committed to working with all County leaders to establish and maintain OIG independence so that its opinions, conclusions and recommendations are impartial and viewed by others as impartial. I welcome further discussions with County leaders regarding the concerns I have expressed over the protection of the OIG’s independence.